/2 cont./

614 887 156 The chieftaincy of each clan was filled by the oldest man, who was called chunel. (It seems to have the same meaning as the word catinab, but some informants recognized the latter as the one used in the adjacent municipality of Oxchuc.) The office was not hereditary, and upon the death of a chunel the oldest man 156 614 888 776 554 of the clan was venerated as such. The chief of the clan was respected and feared, because he was recognized as endowed with supernatural power which, through his lab, he exercised over all the members of the clan. Two informants of advanced age defined the chunel as "the oldest one and the greatest sorcerer." The lab feeds on souls, and a person who has "done wrong" is 776 761 [784] [626] "eaten" by the lab of the one offended and dies. In this way social control was exercised on and among the members of the clan, never going beyond the limits of this. The life of the individual is intimately bound to the life of the lab, or guardian 776 spirit: the death of one brings with it the death of the other. All [756] [827] [787] the Cancuqueros have their lab, but they hide it and sometimes deny it. The curer knows which is the lab of the sick person because "he hears it in the pulse." The lab reveals itself in dreams to "its owner," with whom it speaks because "it is his own company." One person discovers the lab of another "because he sees it." The lab takes care of its owner, defends him, and is the in- 178 614 626 776 strument of revenge for an injury unjustly received. Today this concept is intimately bound up with the omniscience of the patron saint: only with the permission of San Juan can a lab "eat" the soul of a chapomal, or "clan brother," and this permission is granted only in the case when the saint is unfavorably impressed by the conduct of the individual. In any case the lab never wreaks its vengeance except for a bad act that would fully justify 614 626 it according to the social morality. As can be seen, social control was not only rooted in the chief of the clan, but this function extended to the whole group, as happens at present.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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241 825 *they said to me, "while we go over with the other two." I fell asleep. Then the raccoon entered. And so I believe the raccoon is very bright.*

Also there is the wild pig, who is less bright than the raccoon.

Another "thief" of the milpa is a small black insect which eats beans. These are eliminated in the following way:

291 *When we plant beans, the women go with us wearing a new skirt and a new shawl. They walk near the plants, waving the shawl. The animals die. It has to be a new skirt. My mother proved it. She went with an old skirt, and she saw that they did not die. They just fled to the mountain out of shame. It is the smell of the old skirt that scared them away.*

241 825 783 788 If many animals are eating the crops, Indians buy three twenty-cent candles. They take them to the fields and light them, praying in Tzeltal: "God, holy world, please look at me and speak to the little animals. God, holy rock, holy forest, please look at me, hear me, speak to the animals."

The candles are media through which communication is made with the gods as well as gifts which seal the contract with the gods ensuring their protection and guardianship over the crops.

241 706 784 Guarding the crops also involves avoidance of certain kinds of behavior by the farmer and his wife. Farmers must always avoid irritating the spirits of the heaven who control the elements which make the growth of the crop possible. One informant explained:

One should not have sexual relations with anyone in the milpa because the Father Sun [Tatik K'ak'al] *gets angry or "ends his heart." He will not give crops. He gets very hot. One time, many women in town were looking for lovers. They would have sexual relations with boys in the daytime. The Father Sun got angry and caused the crops to burn. There was very little corn. The price went up to twenty cents a liter. People bought bread and mixed it with the nixtamal.*

It is different if a man is married to a woman in the church. The Tatik K'ak'al does not get angry. The Tatik K'ak'al does not have a woman of his own, and so he gets jealous if he sees people having sexual relations in the milpa in the daytime.

But if you have relations at night with a man in the milpa, Our grand-

241 776 784

mother the Moon gets angry. This might cause an eclipse of the moon, and the crops will suffer because there will be no sun.

There is no prohibition, however, against having sexual relations prior to planting or at other crucial stages, as there are for other Maya Indians (Wagley 1941:34). [171]

During the growing season, candles are lit in the milpa as protection against wind as well as robbers, who "lose their luck" when this is done. 241 788

The spirits' care of the crops. The crops have souls, given by the spirits, which will be lost if they are not cared for. The spirits "watch over the crops as parents watch over their children." The term for seed (*yal*) is a metaphorical extension of the term for "child of a woman." 241 774 776

The following myths give different, occasionally contradictory versions of the origin of crops. This central truth emerges in all of them: The spirits have given us our crops and will continue to do so as long as we offer thanks in the form of ceremonies and gifts to them. [782]

Santo Tomás [the patron saint of Oxchuk] had intercourse with Santa Lucía. She wanted [asked for] *the soul of corn, and he gave her the seed of corn. Then there came forth beans, corn, and wheat. But then all the saints of San Bartolo and San Miguel [neighboring towns] asked for the soul of corn. Then the soul of beans left us and went to hot country. Now it does not grow well in the pueblo. Also, the avocado has gone to Comitán. The matasano and ground beans went to Oxchuk when Santa Lucía fought with Santo Tomás.* [539]

The myth of the origin of crops overlays an older myth which has parallels in other groups of Maya-speaking Indians (Castro 1965, Wagley 1941:20). 773 241 171

Formerly, during a famine, there was hunger. The tzisim, *an insect of Ariola, came to take the corn from underground. Thus the ancestors got their first seed. For this reason, people say that corn was born underground, brought up by the tzisim. But I believe God sent us corn.* [539]

Another version has synthesized the role of the saints and that of the animal agent. 241 776 825 539

Chapter 8

Taking Care of the Lord Spirits

Religious behavior is concerned with two major goals: maintaining a given state of prosperity and protecting the community against disaster. In the words of one informant: "All of the goods which we enjoy—the corn, beans, and wheat that we eat, the animals which work for us and give us food—are the gifts of the Lord spirits." The technique for maintaining the flow of goods of the world is the annual cycle of fiestas for the saints. The strategy for protecting the community against disaster is through avoidance of offense and special offerings to the gods identified with pre-hispanic deities and spirits. Responsibility for the ceremonial cycle is assigned to officials who represent the community, but everyone is responsible for the avoidance of disaster, since any transgression of moral behavior by an individual can cause their wrath and bring destruction of crops and animals. The protective rituals involve beliefs continuous from pre-hispanic times; maintenance depends on Catholic saints.

Kinds of Lord Spirits

Religious behavior is based on an understanding of the personality and rank of each deity in a hierarchy of power. The people distinguish two major categories of gods: the lord spirits of the heaven, *ʔ'ultatik ta ʔ'ulʔan*, and the lord spirits of the church, *ʔ'ultatik ta ʔ'ulna*. The prefix *ʔ'ul* in all of these terms can be translated as spirit. All growing things—people, plants, and animals—have a spirit. *Tatik* can be translated as our lords, elders, or fathers. The categories of spirits discussed here differ from the ʔuleletik (Chapter 1) since these are spirits possessed by the place in which they dwell, as indicated by the possessive form of the noun with the prefix *s*.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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Religious Behavior

869 776 Socialization of the child includes teaching him how to adjust to spirits of the house and of the surrounding hills and springs as well as to people in his social environment. He learns the obligations he owes to these spirits in the rituals of house inauguration and curing. Place spirits are given an ethnic identity. The ancestor figures who live in the cave are Indians from whom all the people originate. The Ladino spirits residing in the houses and springs are a mythological projection of a conquered people who have learned to coexist with their conquerors by paying tribute of candles, food, liquor, and entertainment. If the spirits are not won over, they will admit the evil spirits who bring sickness and death. Their presence is known only by the trouble they permit rather than by good occurences; the miracles they perform are an undoing of the harm they have permitted.

776 782 789 The belief in the potentially dangerous nature of these spirits when their envy or appetite is aroused is linked to an understanding that men and gods alike are jealous and vindictive. It generates behavior that is in conformity with that of the ancestors. A sense of security is reinforced by the protective symbols of incense, the cross of palm hung on the entrance posts of the yard and house, candles which "blind the eye of the devil," and garlic mixed with hot herbs which exude an odor that evil spirits dislike. When the uneasy contract between spiritual and human coresidents [755] is upset, a curing ritual is performed to make everyone "of one heart." Be- [571] havior with respect to both spirits and people stems from a policy of ap- [273] peasement through entertainment and liquor provided in household ceremonials.

776 177 178 Behavior differs in regard to the category of saints called "spirits in the heaven" and those called "spirits in the church." Spirits of the heavens have incorporated pre-Conquest deities with those introduced by the missions. They are a more powerful force influencing human moral behavior. [834] Illicit sexual relations carried out in the milpa by day are believed to [784] arouse the envy of "Our Father the Sun" who will cause the milpa to burn by refusing to give way to rain. Similarly "Our Grandmother the

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

Moon" will not give way to the sun if her envy is aroused by seeing such things. These spirits of the heavens have greater control over natural forces than the spirits of the church, or saints. The saints have only limited influence over the souls of particular crops and chickens; people say "they are just of the pueblo."

The distinction between the "big saints of the church" and the lesser saints is recognized in the rituals accorded each group. Four of the saints are given big fiestas which are longer, require more expenditures, and involve more people than the fiestas for the lesser saints. Few distinctions are made between the personalities of the big saints and those of the lesser saints. They are big because their fiestas are big. The fact that the townspeople have selected four from the rostrum of saints given them suggests a link with the four guardian gods of the pre-Conquest pantheon, but except for San Pedro the Martyr's identification with Chac, or Cha'uk in Tzeltal, I could not make any other associations.

To say that there is a system of beliefs does not rule out inconsistencies. Some contradictions can coexist without giving rise to tension. Awareness of incongruence either between beliefs, or between beliefs and behavior associated with them, arises in specific events in which the conflict becomes apparent—that is, when the participants must make choices between alternatives that affect their interests.

The people do not recognize any division between pre- and post-Conquest spiritual entities. Sometimes two personalities from Catholic sources may be equated with one of pre-Conquest origin in order to fit a story format, as in the case of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, with K'oš (Chapter 8). The priests, who had a special dispensation to make whatever cultural translations were necessary in teaching the doctrines of the church (Doctrina Cristiana Lima 1584 III, 3, Recopilación de Leyes, Ley 22 lib. cited in Lamb 1956:531), are responsible for some of the reworking of the two traditions. But local elaborations reveal indigenous cognitive patterning.

Contradictions in myths concerning the origin of crops show some gaps in the union of pre-and post-Conquest legends. The gift of corn is attributed in one myth to the patroness, Santa Lucía, who received it from the patron saint of the neighboring town of Oxchuk. Another myth gives

8: Hunt E-4,5 (1958)1962 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango
Aguacatenango

626 754 784 Therefore, the threat of supernatural sanction is powerful as a communal weapon against social deviation. 64

621 We can see, then, that the structural dynamics of village life are composed of opposing forces. On the one hand, there is a tendency toward egalitarianism which is expressed in the formal organization of political power and the economic life of the village as a unit. On the other hand, there is a tendency toward deviation from the economic norms which is repressed and expressed in the belief system and the sanctioning of deviants. (Obviously, if people would not tend to deviate from the egalitarian norm, witchcraft "specialization" would not be necessary!)

121 There is no society in the world which does not possess criteria for social differentiation. Some criteria are, by nature, universal: the basic biological differences between persons (age, sex) or psychological skills (intelligence, mental deficiency). Some other criteria are culturally determined (age-grade, class, wealth and so on). Even among societies in which the life conditions preclude social stratification, such as the Siriono, some few cultural criteria of individual social differentiation are always present. When I suggest that Amatenango and 621 571 Aguacatenango tend to be communities which reinforce homogeneity at the economic, political, and cultural levels, I am far from [576] indicating that individuals are not evaluated differentially. In every social situation, even meeting on the street, Amatenangueros and Aguacatecos make social distinctions and determine their relative position with respect to each other: one would call a